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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1336
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: INTERNATIONAL NOTIFICATION OF U.S.
SATELLITE ENGAGEMENT DELIVERED TO MOD

REF: STATE 17336

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (U) This is an action request: see para four.

¶3. (SBU) Embassy's Defense Attache delivered reftel notification to Turkmenistan's First Deputy Defense Minister, Colonel Atabayev, on February 22, 2008. Atabayev said he had seen a news story on the satellite engagement and expressed appreciation for delivery of the notification. In his capacity as the deputy defense minister with responsibility for Turkmenistan's new civil emergency service, he asked three questions:

-- According to the news report, some of the fragments could be as large as football-size. Are aircraft (presumably U.S.) or air defense systems able to shoot at and break up these fragments while still in the atmosphere to reduce the possible danger?

-- Does the U.S. military have a projection of when and where the debris will fall and can that be provided to Turkmenistan in order to protect air travel? And can updates with detailed coordinates and times be passed to Turkmenistan if the debris may land in Turkmenistan's vicinity? He mentioned, for example, the Turkmenistan president is scheduled to fly to Moscow on February 22.

-- What actions should Turkmenistan's government and people take if debris from the satellite is found? Will the U.S. military want to recover or destroy it? What dangers could the debris pose so that first responders are properly prepared? Are there special handling instructions for the different types of debris? Could the fuel or other fluids contaminate the soil and what potential handling procedures would be necessary?

¶4. (U) Request Department's assistance in responding to Atabayev's questions in para 3.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: The U.S. Government and NATO are working hard to help Turkmenistan develop a civil emergency capability. As the head of Turkmenistan's still-fledgling civil emergency service, Atabayev clearly wants to be seen as taking his new responsibility seriously. A response would help strengthen Atabayev in his new position -- and our budding civil emergency cooperation. END COMMENT.
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